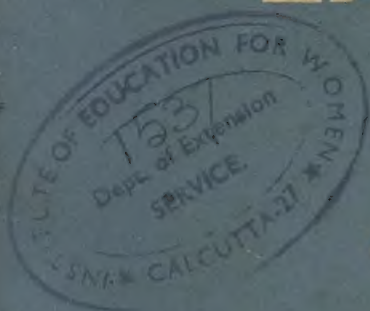


LITTLE PEOPLE IN FAR-OFF LANDS



RUSSIA

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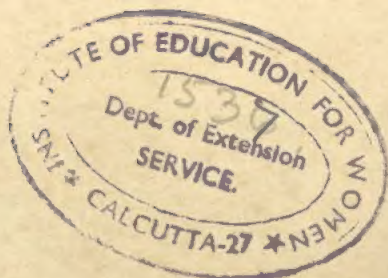
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RUSSIA

CHAPTER I

MOSCOW



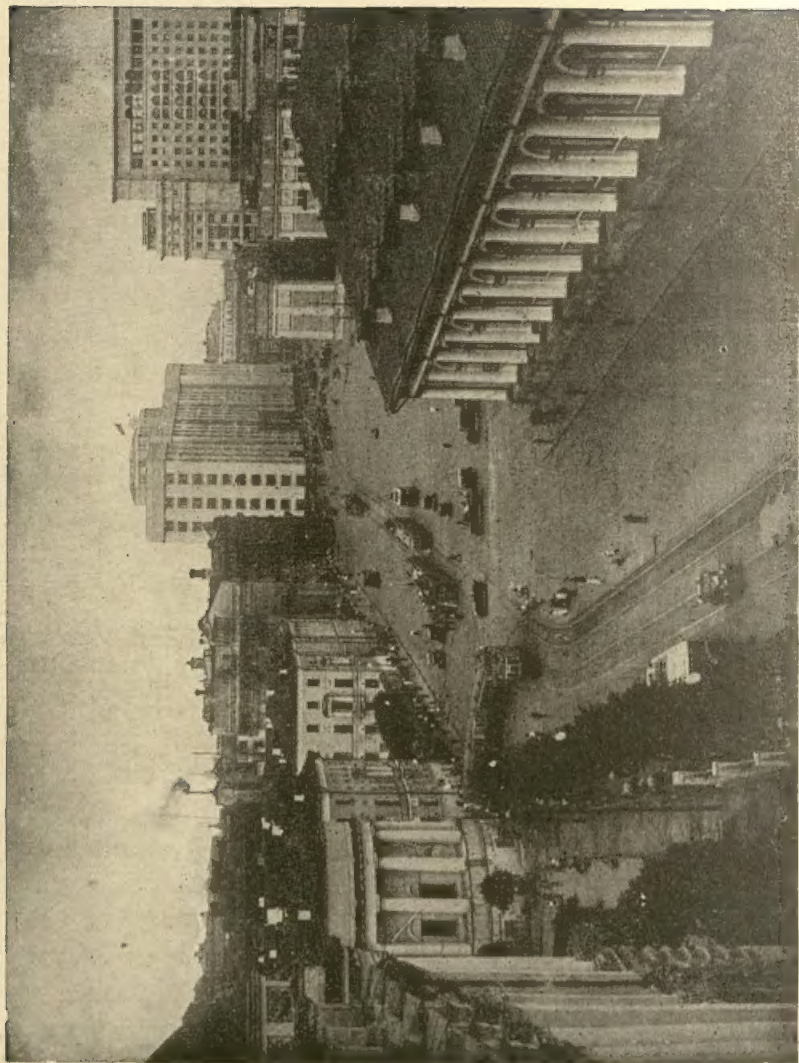
IN this book we are visiting one of the biggest countries in the world, Russia, and it extends for miles and miles across Europe and Asia. Some parts of it are desert, and some are rich and fertile. Some are baked by the sun; others lie in the frozen North.

The people, too, are of many different races. They do not all speak the same language, and while some live in houses, as we do, there are others who dwell in tents, like the Arabs.

As the country is so big, we shall not be able to visit every part of it. All the same, what we do see is sure to give us plenty to talk about when our journey is over.

First of all, then, let us imagine we have arrived in Russia's chief city, or capital, Moscow. It is lucky we have not arrived in winter time. Had we done so we should have found it bitterly cold and most likely snow-covered. Had we arrived in the middle of summer we should have found it just the opposite—very hot indeed. But now we see it at its best, in springtime.

Moscow is one of the oldest cities in Europe, yet as we look about us we notice that much of it



The old Palace and many new buildings, Moscow

looks new and up to date. This is because only a few years ago much of it was re-built. Many new plans were made and some of the schemes are not finished yet.

Here, for example, we see the start of a mighty building which will take a long time yet before it is finished. It is to provide the people of Moscow with a sort of central meeting place, something like one of our Town Halls, only much bigger. Indeed, when it is finished it will be the highest building in the world.

As we go about the city, we walk along fine, wide streets and watch cars, and single-decker trolley-buses going to and fro. We see that there are many shops, some of them very smart, and well-stocked with goods of all kinds. We pass huge blocks of offices, hotels, schools, museums, a fine university and many theatres.

Yet not all Moscow's buildings are new. One, especially, of which the people are most proud, is a very ancient place. Here it is, in the heart of the city. It is called the Kremlin.

Years ago the Kremlin was a fortress, and a strong high wall still surrounds it. Now it is the centre of the Russian Government. It is not one building but many, joined by gardens and lawns. Among them are several churches, and their towers and domes gleam golden in the sunlight.

Along one side of the Kremlin runs the Moscow

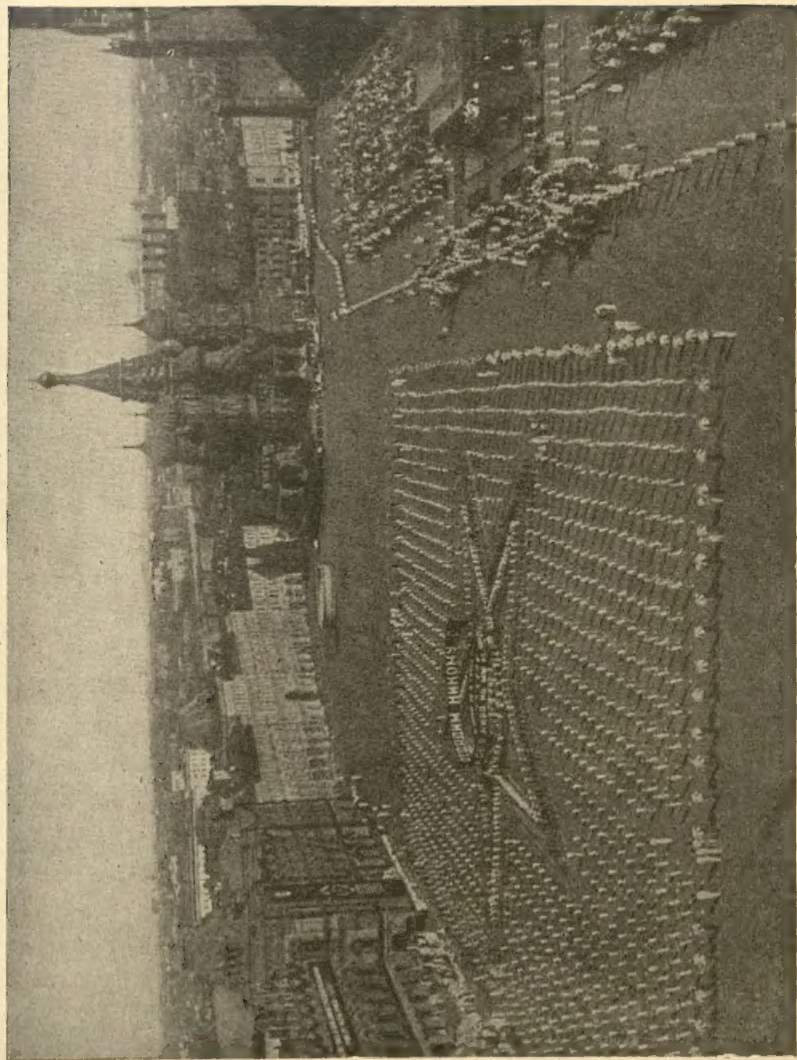
River, and we can walk along the wide river bank and watch the traffic upon it. There is much to be seen, for although we are far from any ocean, canals join the river to other rivers and far-off seas and from there come great steamships. They bring cargoes of timber, fruit and oil and many of them carry passengers.

The people of Moscow get their water supply from the river, for it is a clean stream, and in summer we find stretches of it dotted with white-sailed yachts and pleasure boats almost like the seaside.

We must leave the river now, and cross one of the thirteen new bridges to see other parts of the city. As we walk along we see that most of the people look like ourselves; that is to say, they are Europeans. But here and there we see a face which reminds us of a Chinese, or another which is sun-tanned and dusky, or perhaps another which might be that of an Eskimo. These people are from far-distant parts of Russia, and most likely they have come to Moscow to study at her university.

We take our tickets for a journey on Moscow's underground railway. It is called the "Metro," and is something like the London Underground, or "tube." The station at which we get out is very handsome indeed.

Not far from the station entrance is a park. It is one of many in Moscow and to-day large numbers of people are making their way towards it. This is



A picturesque display by youthful athletes in Red Square, Moscow

because to-day happens to be their "Sixth" day, or day of rest.

Russia does not keep Sunday as we do. Instead, the people take a rest every six days. Their rest day may be a Tuesday or a Friday or a Monday or any other day.

To-day is fine, so many of the people are going to this park. The sound of singing in the distance reaches our ears and we walk through the park in search of it. At last we reach the place and we find a big crowd of people enjoying community songs—that is, songs which they can all sing together. There is a leader, or conductor, beating time for them.

We notice a sports arena or stadium, where many of the young people of Moscow are learning such sports as tennis, basket-ball, wrestling, boxing and athletics.

We see that there is a doctor present in case of injury and also instructors to help the learners.

As we continue our walk we find bands and orchestras, dancing floors, swings and roundabouts, and also rooms in which chess and draughts are being enjoyed. There are many places for refreshments, so the people of Moscow do not find their rest days dull.

There is one important part of the park which we have yet to see. It is the section for boys and girls. But we must give *them* a whole chapter to themselves!

CHAPTER II

BOYS AND GIRLS

To-day we are going to spend some time with the children of Moscow.



Young builders in the Children's Park

First of all, we will go to one of their schools. In many ways, it is very much like your own school, and the children are doing the same kind of lessons. But besides ordinary school work, we find that

most of the children have other things to do, because they are members of what are called the "Pioneers."

The Pioneers are something like our scouts and guides. Nearly every school has its group and there is a section for the younger children, like our own Cubs and Brownies.

As we look round the school we see the children's "Wall Newspaper." This is pinned up on the wall, and contains news, stories and drawings done by the boys and girls themselves. It gives all the news of the school, and we see that some children are being praised for good work. But one or two are being told by their class-mates that they can do better, if they try!

The Pioneer Leaders in each school arrange meetings for songs, plays, hobbies, dancing, and many other things. They also try to make the "free" days enjoyable. Here on the notice board, we see a list of things which the Pioneers hope to do on the next free day.

The leader has arranged for those who wish, to go to one of the parks. You and I are invited too. It is not far to the park and on arrival we go to a large section set apart for children.

Do you see those children over there in a very small trolley-bus? What fun that is—but not only fun, for the boy at the wheel really intends to become a bus driver when he grows up, and this small and safe model is helping him to learn.

If we were to go to another part of Moscow we could see a children's railway, with real engines and carriages, signals, stations and everything. Here boys who hope to become railwaymen spend their free days learning and having fun at the same time.



A study for the young naturalists

But we must see what our own Pioneers are doing. The leader is looking after the younger ones, while some of the older boys and girls have gone off to an "Inventors Building" near by. Here they will see all sorts of models of different machines, such as ships, engines, planes and factory machines, and they will be allowed to work them.

A few more have gone to another building called the Young Naturalists' Club, where they can see all sorts of birds and animals, flowers and plants. There are people in charge who will answer all their questions.

Most of the older children are making their way to the part of the park where games are played. Can you see that tall tower in the distance? That is the most exciting thing of all, so let us go and have a look at it. As we get nearer we are reminded of a helter-skelter tower such as we sometimes see in our own fair-grounds. But this is much higher, and instead of people sliding down, we notice numbers of older boys and girls climbing up a winding stair to the top.



A thrilling descent by parachute

Then, as we watch, we see them jump, one after the other, from the very highest point ! A moment later they are floating safely to earth, held up by a parachute, fastened to a wire at the top of the tower. This is a parachute tower, and parachute-jumping is a thrilling and popular sport in Russia. The boys and girls no sooner reach the ground than they line up to climb the tower once again !

We see there is another building, called a Table-games Club. It contains table-tennis, chess, draughts, and many other indoor games. When it rains it is crowded.

But to-day, as it is fine, most of us wish to enjoy the outdoor games and pastimes. One place is nearly full. This is the track on which pedal motor-car and cycle races are being held. Some of our older Pioneers race along at a breath-taking speed.

Soon after this, our Pioneer leader calls us together to go for a welcome meal in the Children's Restaurant, and when this is done the leader takes the younger children back to their homes.

But for us, and for some of the older boys and girls, there is the Children's Theatre.

This theatre is just like one for grown-ups, excepting that no grown-up may enter it unless taken in by a child. The performers work very hard, and as seriously as if they were acting before an audience of older people.

When we go in we find a very noisy crowd of young people, but in spite of the noise they are not bad mannered. There are many Pioneer leaders there, each looking after a group and seeing that they behave themselves. A few fathers and mothers have been invited too.



Peasant Dancing in the Children's Theatre

As soon as the curtain rises, all the children are quiet and they watch the play very closely. It is an adventure story, and it takes place in a part of Russia not far from China, thousands of miles from Moscow. Next we see an exhibition of Peasant dancing. Everyone enjoys it, and when at last the performance is ended, the children clap and cheer the players for a long time.

So our free day comes to an end. We must now go back to the hotel where we are staying, and get ready to leave Moscow in order to see some other parts of this big country.

CHAPTER III

A RUSSIAN FARM

Now I want you to imagine that we have left Moscow far behind. We are speeding away southward in a train, bound for one of Russia's great farming areas. As our train goes along, you notice that the fields are not like ours in Britain. Instead of being small and separated one from the other by hedges, they stretch as far as the eye can see.

We leave the train at a big city, enter a motor and are driven along a fine wide road into the country. Very soon we reach the farm we are to visit.

"But surely," someone remarks, "this cannot be a farm! Why, it is a village—almost a small town, with houses, shops, even a hospital!"

That is quite true, and yet it is really a farm. It is known as a "Collective Farm," because all the villagers have joined together, or collected into a group to work it.

And here is a friend named Ivan come to greet us. He is the manager, or director of the farm, and he speaks to us in English, which he has found time to learn amid his many duties.

"You are in the famous Black Earth district here," he says proudly. "Our Black Earth is the best soil in all Russia. We have a mixed farm here, but most of all we grow wheat," he adds.

"But before I tell you about our Collective Farm," he goes on, "I can see you are wondering



"Keep Fit" is the aim of these young farmers

how these houses and shops and hospital can really be called a farm."

We nod our heads for we *are* puzzled. So Ivan takes us round the place and explains. He tells us that the houses are where the farm-workers live. They seem cheerful and contented. We learn that

they all share in the money which is received from selling the produce of the farm. There is no one farmer who owns everything. Instead all the people on the farm work for one another.

Of course, they have to have some men to direct them, to tell them what work needs doing at once and to lead them in their many tasks. These head men are voted for, and usually those who know most about farming are picked as the leaders.

Ivan has been chosen as head of the whole farm. There are others in charge of ploughing, others who look after the cowmen, or the shepherds, or the corn-sowers, and the groups who carry out various other jobs on the big farm.

When the day's work is done, many of these farm-workers spend an hour or two in the new and smart clubroom which Ivan proudly points out to us. There is a library, and a reading-room, a games room and a gymnasium, a room with a wireless set, another with a stage, and a third with a small cinema. There is also another small hall where lectures on farming are given.

We go farther along the " farm street " and pass a school. Here the children of the farm workers are being taught and some of them, when they are old enough, will go to other schools and perhaps even to the university in the town some miles away.

Not far from the school we notice a field fitted up as an amusement park for outdoor games and

sports. Rising high in one part is a parachute tower, such as we saw in Moscow.

Our guide tells us that there are two other places in the farm of which they are very proud. One is the hospital, which has its own doctor and some very up-to-date equipment for helping people



Modern methods on a Collective Farm

to get well. The other is a workroom in which clever experts spend their time studying the seeds and the soil of the farm, to help grow bigger and better crops every year.

We wonder how so huge a farm as this can be worked. Ivan laughs at our puzzled looks. "We use many machines," he says.

Then he tells us how, not far away, there is a Government tractor station or garage. This is packed with motor ploughs and other wonderful farming machines which plough and sow, and reap and thresh, whenever they are wanted. The Government receives a share of the crops as payment.

This kind of farm, we agree, is not at all like ours. It is so big, and so many people work upon it, and it is more like a small town than an ordinary farm. "And yet," says Ivan, "it is not one of the biggest in Russia. There are thousands like it, and hundreds bigger." This gives us some idea of the size of this country.

It is almost time for us to leave now. We have received a good meal in the house of one of the workers and we have found time for a hurried glance at some of the other parts of the farm. So now we return to the town, nearly forty miles away.

CHAPTER IV

AN UNUSUAL TOWN

Once again we must imagine ourselves journeying across this great big land of Russia. We are travelling on the *longest* railway in the world, and to go the whole way takes the train *ten days*.

In some places, the railway goes across miles and miles of very dry country, without any rivers and streams. So you see, the great engines which

pull these trains are specially made to carry big supplies of water in their boilers.

The train in which we are travelling contains many things which we do not usually find in English trains. There is a *bathroom*, for example, and a *library* of many books. Reading helps to pass the time as the train goes along, day after day, across the huge plains on which so much of the world's corn is grown. Or the train-attendant will supply us with table games, if we ask him—draughts, chess, and cards. And of course, as this train is our home for several days, there are good sleeping and dining coaches.

So on we go, eastwards from Moscow, passing from *Europe* into *Asia*. If we were to remain in the train we should at last reach the end of the railway, not very far from Japan.

But we are not going so far as that. Instead, after five days of travelling, we get out at a station in the heart of Russia. Our reason for leaving the railway, is to change from train to a sea-plane, so that we may continue our journey northwards. We must go by plane, for there is no railway running in the direction that we wish to travel.

After some delay we take off in a plane which rises from the *river* running through the town. We shall soon see the reason for travelling in a sea-plane.

Hour after hour our plane flies on. Looking down we see that the country below is nothing but

a mass of trees. We are, in fact, flying over the world's biggest forest-land.

Russian timber-land goes on for miles, yes, for hundreds of miles, and it is almost as wide as it is long. So thick is this forest that many parts have never been visited by man. Here bears, wolves and other wild creatures are to be found.

The river is a good guide for our pilot, as it is going in the same direction as he wishes to go. The river also is our landing-place. If anything were to go wrong with our plane and force us to land among the trees we should most likely crash. But as our plane is a sea-plane, we could come down in safety on the river, for it does not flow rapidly, and it is very wide.

At length we find ourselves over a clearing in the forest-land and soon afterwards we see a town below us. The plane glides down through the air and comes to rest on the river. We go ashore to see something of the place.

It is indeed an unusual town. For one thing it is big, and big towns in the Arctic circle, where we are now, are very, very rare. It is a lonely town, too. It stands hundreds of miles from any other town and has no way out, except by river and plane. There are no roads through the great forests over which we have flown, and there are no railways.

If we had been able to come here a few years ago (though it would have meant a long and dan-

gerous journey) we should not have seen this town at all. We should not have found even a village here. In those days the spot where we stand was nothing but an Arctic wilderness, with herds of wild reindeer roaming about.



Children of the north near their log home

Then the Russians thought of a plan to make this wilderness produce useful things. They sent people to settle here. Those settlers were very hardy people and most of them are still living in the town they built.

Here is one of the settlers, who tells us about some of their troubles in the very early days.

“It is a go-ahead town now,” he says, “and as

you see we have a fine Town Hall, a cinema, and many houses. Nearly all the buildings are made of wood, for that is very plentiful.

"Perhaps you notice something also which is made of wood?" he says, as he points to the road. We see that it, also, is covered with timber. Our friend tells us that if it were not covered, then it would turn into a stream of liquid mud when the sun came out, after the long, arctic winter.

"Look at the buildings, too," he adds. "Do you see that all are raised from the ground a little? The earth in these parts is frozen nearly all the year, hard and solid. When we first came here the stoves in our huts melted it, and made it soft; our houses began to give way. Some fell down altogether, so now we build them off the ground, so that the heat in them does not melt the icy ground under the floors."

In company with our friend we go round the town and see the public buildings. We look at the well-planned Town Hall, the fire station, the offices, and the power station which gives them electric light.

Finally we reach the riverside again. Here we see ships which go down to the mouth of the river when the river is ice-free. Some of them have to break a way down even before the ice has melted.

Besides the ships we see many thousands of logs of timber. Some piled up by the riverside and some

floating as rafts, in the water. All these tree trunks are going down-stream, soon to be loaded into big ships at the mouth of the river and taken to many parts of the world.

And now we, too, must continue our journey north, into the Arctic, by sea-plane.

CHAPTER V

THE FAR NORTH

Looking down from our plane, still with the river as our guide, we see that far below, instead of forest there is a brown desert, called the Tundra.

If we could land and see it closely we should notice that it was a kind of moss, on which wild reindeer feed.

In the winter the Tundra is buried under snow and ice, and wrapped in darkness all day as well as all night.

Now we begin to glide towards the earth and at last come to rest on the slow-flowing river at a small trading station or outpost. The Russians who live there see few people except the natives of the country around about, and the pilots of the planes.

There are only a small number of huts, used for sleeping, eating, storing goods and doing repairs to air and river craft. There is also a wireless station which keeps the people here in touch with the outside world, and helps to guide the planes.

"But soon," says one of the men who comes to greet us, "there will be much better buildings. Among them is to be built a splendid hospital."

This surprises us at first, for we should not expect to find such a building so far away from



Traders on their way to market

a town. But we understand better when our friend tells us that the air of this Northern land is purer than anywhere else.

The cold kills all germs in the air and no better place could be found for helping people who are weak to get strong and healthy again.

To this outpost come the natives of the district. They often travel long distances without either map

or compass. They are something like Eskimos, and they bring their goods here to sell and exchange for other things.

Their dog-teams, or their reindeer sledges, bring valuable furs from animals they have trapped. The furs are exchanged for other goods which have reached the outpost from towns far to the south.

From what we hear at the outpost, we should be amused if we could pay a visit to the tent of one of these native families. The tent itself is made of reindeer skin, and inside, we should find the whole family wearing clothes made of the skin of reindeer.

Our meal, most likely, would be reindeer meat, too, and we should find that even reindeer's bones were being used as pegs, needles and for other things in daily use.

But what would make us smile, I think, would be the sight of other articles which we did not expect to find in such an out-of-the-way place as this. In one corner we might see a gramophone. In another a small pile of books, and, hanging on the skin walls, a number of pictures. We could also expect to see sewing-machines in some of the tents !

All these things would have been exchanged for furs. The natives enjoy having them, and no doubt they find them useful. But before the Russians brought steamers laden with goods along these rivers, the natives had no chance to have goods of this sort.

In those days they were poor and lonely and their tribes were becoming fewer and fewer in number every year. Now that things have changed they are happier and the children are even able to go to school, like the children in all other parts of Russia.

Teachers go round from one outpost to another, usually on reindeer or dog sledges. They often make very long and dangerous journeys to reach their pupils. The best children get a chance of leaving their outposts and going to bigger schools in the south. The town we visited in the last chapter had a big school of this kind. The children stay there for three or four years.

They are well-behaved children, but they are not used to sleeping in cosy clean beds, for example. At one school the teacher who went to waken a newly-arrived set of children found them all fast asleep on the floor. No, they had not fallen out of bed! But they had always slept on the ground in their tents and were afraid of beds. So at night, after the teacher had gone, they all crept out of their beds and fell asleep on the floor, instead!

Many of the things they learn in these schools are not in the least like your lessons. They learn to read, of course, and also to write. But in addition they have lessons in looking after reindeer, in fishing, and hunting, and fur-curing.

They also get to know much about the weather,

about ice, timber, and many other things about their own land. They learn, too, something about mining and metals, and even farming, because the Russians are turning this northern wilderness into a busy place.



A Pioneer angler proud of his catch

They have discovered that there are many valuable minerals and metals in the icy earth : coal, gold, and nickel are already being obtained.

Many weather-stations, too, have been opened in this land. Here people study the winds and the rainfall, the amount of cold, the times when ice forms or melts, and many other things. What they find out in their studies helps the pilots

of the planes, and the captains of ships in the Northern Sea.

You remember, perhaps, that I said the native children were taught something about farming. Not long ago there were no farms at all in this land. It was thought to be far too cold for anything but

moss to grow, and the natives themselves were only hunters ; they knew nothing about growing crops.

Now the Russians have managed to produce special seeds of corn and vegetables that will grow plants that do not mind the cold. They also grow very quickly, so they can be planted and gathered during the very short summer they have in that



Children wearing their traditional costumes

part of Russia. This has brought farming to the Northern land.

At many places, too, greenhouses have been put up. There are some very big ones at the outpost where we have anchored. How wonderful to see them growing crops of lettuces, tomatoes and other vegetables and fruit !

These crops, both indoor and outdoor, help to

keep the people of the district healthy. Before they were able to grow these things the people often fell ill in spite of the fresh air, because they had nothing to eat but meat. Vegetables, you know, are necessary to good health, but vegetables were impossible to get from the towns or villages in the south, they were too far away.

Now, all is changed. The country grows its own wheat, potatoes, carrots, greens, lettuces and, in warm greenhouses, even strawberries! More and more crops are to be grown and lots of the native children will find work as farmers or gardeners, when they are old enough.

There are many other interesting and unusual things to be seen in this Arctic part of Russia, but I am afraid our time is up.

We could go still farther down this great river and join an ocean-going steamer at the mouth. Its cargo would be timber, or some mineral from the mines. It would take us along a sea which is frozen over in winter, and land us at a Norwegian port, or perhaps bring us right back to Britain.

Our other way is to fly in the plane, southward up the river. That is the way we came and we decide to take it, so that we may have one more peep at Russia before we leave for home.

So up the river we fly, once again looking down, first on the Tundra, then on the wide-spreading forest. At last we find ourselves at the town where

we left the railway train. The great engine comes in this time from the *opposite* direction. Once more we climb aboard and the train slowly pulls out on its long, five-day journey to Moscow.

CHAPTER VI

HOMeward BOUND—A FINAL PEEP

It was said at the start of this little book that we should not be able to visit every part of this huge country of Russia. Now we are on the point of leaving for home, and the train is taking us to the port of Leningrad. Here we shall find a ship to take us back to Britain.

But as our train travels on, I can tell you a little about those parts of Russia which we have not been able to see.

Far away to the south, and a long way indeed either from Moscow or the Arctic, lie Russia's oilfields. Here are districts dotted with thin, steel towers. These are the tops of the oil wells.

Out of these wells Russia draws huge quantities of fuel for her machinery both in factory and field. Much of this petrol is used to drive heavy tractors and most of the machines we saw on the farm we visited. These tractors pull ploughs over the corn lands, and in a short time they do the work which would take many men and horses much longer to perform.

Not far from the oilfields we find many holiday

resorts and rest centres, where people spend their holidays, on the coast of the Black Sea.

Here the climate is so soft and warm, that rich juicy fruits such as melons and tangerines grow very well. Tea and vines are also grown. How different from the cold North !



Children enjoying their holiday at a famous Black Sea resort

If we go far to the East from this district we come to a country—though still part of Russia—called Turkestan. It has nothing to do with Turkey, and it is, in fact, not very far from India. So, as you may imagine, it is a warm country, and is able to grow big crops of cotton for the Russians.

Not long ago it grew very little cotton because the ground was too dry. Then the Russians built dams on the few rivers of the country and stored the water, and they also cut canals to take this water to the cotton fields.

Now, because of this, Turkestan grows three times as much cotton as it used to grow, and it has many mills where the cotton is woven into cloth.

Russia makes much use of her mighty rivers for supplying electricity. In several places great walls or barriers of concrete have been built across the wide rivers, which hold back a great mass of water. This is made to flow through powerful machines which make electricity. The current is then sent along cables to all parts of the country.

Well, here we are now in Leningrad, and the time has come when we must join our ship and really say good-bye to Russia. We make up our minds that we will come again before long, for there is still very much left for us to see.

QUESTIONS

Chapter I

- 1 Why was it lucky for us to arrive in Moscow in springtime instead of winter or summer?
- 2 Say what you have learnt about the streets and buildings of Moscow.

Chapter II

- 1 How do the school Pioneers help the children?
- 2 How did the children amuse themselves in the Children's Park?

Chapter III

Mention some of the things we saw on the large Russian farm.

Chapter IV

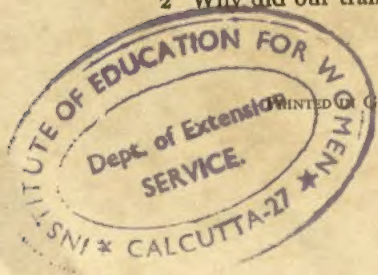
- 1 Say in what way the railway carriages on the world's longest railway differed from an English train.
- 2 Tell something about the forest-lands of Russia.
- 3 Why were the roads made of wood, and the houses raised from the ground?
- 4 Why do you think it was important to choose a sea-plane instead of an ordinary plane?

Chapter V

- 1 The fur traders found the reindeer very useful for many purposes. Mention some of these uses.
- 2 Why did the children prefer lying on the floor to sleeping in cosy, clean beds?

Chapter VI

- 1 Tell me something about the country called Turkestan.
- 2 Why did our train journey end at Leningrad?



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LITTLE PEOPLE IN FAR OFF LANDS

The books are written in a most entertaining and descriptive manner by capable authors with a first-hand knowledge. Each volume tells the young reader of the home life, dress, food, native customs, games, festivals, products, climate, etc., of the countries dealt with. Each book 32 pages, with questions, and profusely illustrated with reproductions of the most recent photographs.

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